

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAGU 05816 272117Z

ACTION FAA-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 EB-08 DOTE-00 L-03 /022 W

-----018262 272133Z /73

R 271914Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5221

INFO USSOUTHCOM QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

FAA ATLANTA ASO-IF 600

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAIR, PINT, NU

SUBJECT: NICARAGUAN REQUEST FOR FAA ASSISTANCE TO BUILD RUNWAY ON
SOMOZA FAMILY PROPERTY

REF: (A) STATE 288607; (B) MANAGUA 5219

SUMMARY. TECHNICAL DATA REQUESTED FROM GON RELATED TO FAA ASSISTANCE
ON CONSTRUCTION OF MONTELIBAR RUNWAY FOLLOWS BELOW. PROJECT HAS
RECEIVED NOTORIETY LOCALLY DUE TO MAGNITUDE AND ITS LOCATION ON
PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S PERSONAL PROPERTY. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS FAA IN-
SPECT PROJECT ON REIMBURSABLE BASIS AND MAKE BEST PROFESSIONAL
RECOMMENDATIONS WHETHER OR NOT THEY COINCIDE WITH GON PLANS.
END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED LETTER FROM MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS,
ING. ARMEL GONZALEZ (SINCE REPLACED BY LUIS VALLE OLIVARES) DATED
12/19, FORWARDING INFO REQUESTED IN PARAS 2(A) AND (B) OF REFTEL A.
LETTER STATES THAT GON IS INTERESTED IN CONSTRUCTING AT MONTELIBAR
"AN ALTERNATIVE AIRPORT FOR LAS MERCEDES" INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT
MANAGUA.

2. DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF HIGHWAY OFFICIALS, WHO ARE CHARGED WITH
BUILDING THE NEW AIRPORT, HAVE PROVIDED FOLLOWING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS
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PAGE 02 MANAGU 05816 272117Z

POSED PARA 2 REFTEL A:

(1) SOIL FOUNDATIONS FOR MONTELIBAR RUNWAY, ACCORDING TO PRELIMI-
NARY SOIL STUDIES, CORRESPOND TO FAA CLASSIFICATIONS E-8 OR 3-9. THE
RUNWAY WILL HAVE 70 CM OF SUB-BASE COMPRISED OF FILL FROM VARIOUS
BORROW PITS. THE BASE WILL CONSIST OF 30 CM OF CRUSED STONE (FROM

SOMOZA'S READY-MIXED CONCRETE PLANT), IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITEM P-208, GRADE C, OF FAA AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATIONS.

(B) THE RUNWAY WILL BE PAVED WITH ASPHALTIC CONCRETE CONSISTING OF 5 CM OF "BINDER COURSE" AND 5 CM OF "SURFACE COURSE."

(C) ALTHOUGH MAJOR SOMOZA WANTS RUNWAY TO BE CAPABLE OF HANDLING BOEING 747, IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT PLANES OF THAT SIZE WILL LAND THERE. (N.B. 747'S DO NOT YET FLY REGULARLY TO MANAGUA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT LAST MERCEDES, ALTHOUGH THE AIRPORT IS CAPABLE OF RECEIVING THEM. EMBASSY DOUBTS WHETHER PLANES LARGER THAN 727'S WOULD LAND AT MONTELIBAR IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE.)

(D) THERE HAVE BEEN NO CONSULTANTS OR CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS ACTIVE AT MONTELIBAR. DIR GEN OF HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION CREWS HAVE BEEN DOING EARTHMOVING WITH OWN EQUIPMENT. (COMMENT: SUPERVISING ENGINEERS HAVE TOLD EMBOFF THAT THEY KNOW LITTLE ABOUT AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION AND REGRET HAVING BEEN DRAWN INTO THIS PROJECT.)

3. CONSTRUCTION OF INTERNATIONAL QUALITY AIRPORT HAS CAUSED LOCAL CONTROVERSY BECAUSE:

(A) THE AIRPORT IS TO BE LOCATED ON PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S PRIVATE PROPERTY IN A RELATIVELY REMOTE AREA; AND (B) PRELIMINARY CONSTRUCTION WORK ON NEW AIRPORT WAS BEGUN WITHOUT ANY STUDY OF TERRAIN, AIR TRANSPORT NEEDS, OR ANYTHING ELSE NORMALLY CONNECTED WITH MAJOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MANAGU 05816 272117Z

AIRPORT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION.

4. OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER LA PRENSA REPORTED THAT LOCAL ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS SOCIETY (ANIA) ESTIMATES THAT MONTELIBAR AIRPORT WILL COST GON OVER US \$3.5 MILLION. PAPER NOTES THAT THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN CONTEMPLATES BUILDING THE NATION'S ALTERNATE AIRPORT BETWEEN CHINANDEGA AND LEON, FAR TO THE NORTH OF MONTELIBAR. PAPER ALSO COMMENTS THAT WHEREAS A MODERATE-SIZED AIRPORT FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL PLAN TO LAND AT MONTELIBAR HAD BEEN ENVISAGED, THE PRESIDENT'S SON, MAJOR ANASTASIO "TACHITO" SOMOZA, ORDERED THAT AN ALTERNATIVE AIRPORT FOR LAS MERCEDES BE BUILT AT MONTELIBAR, CAPABLE OF SERVING PLANES WITH WEIGHTS EQUIVALENT TO A BOEING 747 AND HAVING A LENGTH OF 2,000 METERS AND A WIDTH OF 45.7 METERS.

5. MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS ENGINEERS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT HAVE INDICATED TO EMBOFF THAT THEY WOULD LIKE US FEDERAL AVIATION AGENCY (FAA) SPECIALISTS TO ADVISE ON TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF MONTELIBAR AIRPORT SURFACING (PREF REFTEL B) BECAUSE THEY HOPE THAT FAA WILL DISCOURAGE IDEA OF BUILDING LARGE AIRPORT THERE. ENGINEERS APPEAR TO BE FEARFUL OF CRITICIZING PROJECT ON THEIR OWN, BUT ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MONTELIBAR PROJECT HAS BEEN POORLY CONCEIVED AND THAT ITS DIMENSIONS HAVE GROWN LIKE Topsy.

6. MINISTER GONZALEZ TOLD EMOBOFF THAT HE HOPES THAT FAA CAN SEND TWO TECHNICIANS TO ADVISE ON MONTELIBAR PROJECT SHORTLY AFTER JANUARY 4, 1978. EMOBOFF ADVISED BOTH HIM AND ING. JOSE ANTONIO CARILLO, NEWLY-APPOINTED VICE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HIGHWAYS, TO HAVE NICARAGUAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON CONTACT FAA HEADQUARTERS THERE TO ARRANGE REIMBURSABLE AGREEMENT FOR VISIT BY FAA SPECIALISTS, PER PARAS 3 AND 4, REFTEL A.

7. COMMENT: EMBASSY IS INCLINED TO RECOMMEND THAT, IF APPROACHED, FAA AGREE TO SEND TWO SPECIALISTS TO INSPECT MONTELIBAR AIRPORT PROJECT ON REIMBURSABLE BASIS. EMBASSY TRUSTS THAT SUCH SPECIALISTS WOULD TAKE A HARD LOOK AT PROJECT AND MAKE THEIR BEST PROFESSIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS, EVEN IF THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS DO NOT ACCORD WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 MANAGU 05816 272117Z

MAJOR SOMOZA'S PLANS.
RUBENSTEIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 27-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Expiration:
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From: MANAGUA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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